

THE GROWTH OF CANADIAN NATIONAL FEELING

BY

W. STEWART WALLACE



“The future of Canada, I believe, depends very largely upon the cultivation of a national spirit.”
—Edward Blake

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*C. Aubrey Grant
Christmas, 1846*

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Librarian of the University of Toronto

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PREFACE

THIS essay was published originally in the *Canadian Historical Review* in 1920, and was then issued separately, in a small edition, as a pamphlet. Repeated requests for this pamphlet, which has long been out of print, have encouraged the author to think that the time is perhaps ripe for its re-issue in a more permanent form, and more especially so since the present year is the sixtieth anniversary of the accomplishment of Canadian national unity. He has taken advantage of the opportunity to revise and expand the essay; and he ventures to hope that in its present form, it will afford a brief, but comprehensive view of what may reasonably be regarded as a vital development of Canadian history.

W. S. W.

*University of Toronto Library,
Empire Day, 1927.*

I. INTRODUCTORY

"A colony, yet a nation—words never before in the history of the world associated together."—SIR WILFRID LAURIER,
Speech in London, England, 1897.

THE process whereby Canadian national feeling has grown to be what it is to-day may rightly be regarded as the central thread of Canadian history. Yet, apart from two or three brief pamphlets and essays of a superficial character, no attempt has hitherto been made to trace in a connected way the stages in this process. The historians of Canada have been many, and not a few of them have been writers of insight and discrimination; but none of them, curiously enough, has laid sufficient stress on this cardinal feature of Canadian history. Where they have touched upon it, they have done so almost invariably in a casual and incidental way. They have described the constitutional changes, the political vicissitudes, the military campaigns, the diplomatic disputes, the economic and intellectual developments; but they have said little about the main fact which these details merely

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serve to explain and illustrate—the growth in Canada of a distinctive national feeling.

The chief reason for this neglect is not far to seek. It lies in the fact—of which Canadians to-day are apt to be forgetful—that Canadian national feeling is a very recent phenomenon. At any rate, it has been recognized only within recent times as a political fact. We are apt to forget that nationalism itself, though as old as the Old Testament, was “isolated” by political scientists not much more than a century ago, and was first critically examined by Lord Acton in his famous essay on *Nationality* in 1862. It is therefore not surprising that Canadian nationalism¹ should have been slow to attract the attention of political students.

We think to-day of the confederation of the British North American provinces in 1867 in terms of national unity. But nothing is more certain than that in 1867 there were many persons who did not think of it in that

¹The term “nationality”, though sometimes used as a synonym for “nationalism”, has a legal connotation which renders it ambiguous; and for this reason I have avoided here its use.

light at all. In the debates on Confederation, there were able and distinguished men who denied, indeed, the possibility of a Canadian national feeling. One of these was Christopher Dunkin, the ablest and most cogent of all the opponents of Confederation, a man who began life as a tutor of Greek in Harvard University, and ultimately became a minister of the crown and a judge in Canada. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly of Canada in 1864, Dunkin said:

Talk, indeed, in such a state of things, of your founding here by this means “a new nationality”—of your creating such a thing—of your whole people here rallying round its new government at Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, is such a thing possible? We have a large class whose national feelings turn towards London, whose very heart is there; another large class whose sympathies centre here at Quebec, or in a sentimental way may have some reference to Paris; another large class whose memories are of the Emerald Isle; and yet another whose comparisons are rather with Washington; but have we any class of people who are attached, or whose feelings are going to be directed with any earnestness, to the city of Ottawa, the centre of the new nationality that

is to be created? In the times to come, when men shall begin to feel strongly on those questions which appeal to national preferences, prejudices and passions, all talk of your new nationality will sound but strangely.¹

Later in the debate he used language even more scornful:

But we—what are we doing? Creating a new nationality, according to the advocates of this scheme. I hardly know whether we are to take the phrase for ironical or not. Is it a reminder that in fact we have no sort of nationality about us, but are unpleasantly cut up into a lot of struggling nationalities, as between ourselves? Unlike the people of the United States, we are to have no foreign relations to look after, or national affairs of any kind; and therefore our new nationality, if we could create it, would be nothing but a name.²

Nor was it only among the opponents of Confederation that the dream of Canadian nationality was regarded as a chimæra. John Rose, afterwards the finance minister of the Dominion, went out of his way in the debates to make it clear that his constituents sup-

¹ *Parliamentary Debates on the subject of the Confederation of the British North American Provinces*, 1865, p. 511.

² *Ibid.*, p. 524.

ported Confederation for practical reasons, and not "from any ardent and temporary impulse or vague aspiration to be part in name of a new nation".¹ Even among the most enthusiastic advocates of Confederation there was not one who did not speak of "the new nationality" in the future tense.

Still later evidence may be adduced. In 1872, W. A. Foster, one of the early apostles of Canadian nationalism, confessed that there were in Canada at that time many Canadians who were void of national feeling. In his address entitled *Canada First*—a document of cardinal importance in Canadian history—he quoted an English visitor as having said that "to the Canadian it is of small concern what you think of his country. He has little of patriotic pride in it himself. Whatever pride of country a Canadian has, its object, for the most part, is outside of Canada." Without subscribing unreservedly to this view, Foster admitted that there was some ground to justify a casual visitor in reaching such a conclusion. "We have too many

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 419.

among us," he said, "who are ever ready to worship a foreign Baal, to the neglect of their own tutelary gods."¹

As late as 1889 Goldwin Smith, an observer who, whatever else may be said about him, was not hostile to the idea of Canadian nationality, scouted the view that such an ideal was within the range of possibility. "*The Bystander*," he wrote, "has the heartiest sympathy with those who strive to make Canada a nation. . . . But there is no use in attempting manifest impossibilities, and no impossibility apparently can be more manifest than that of fusing or even harmonizing a French and Papal with a British and Protestant community."²

Such were the views expressed a generation ago. To-day, however, he would be a bold man who would deny in Canada the existence of a distinctive national feeling—a national feeling not French-Canadian or British-Canadian, but all-Canadian. Since 1892 Canada has had a maritime flag of her own,

¹ Reprinted in *Canada First: A Memorial of the late William A. Foster, Q.C.*, Toronto, 1890.

² *The Bystander*, December, 1889, p. 78.

the union ensign of Canada, the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible unity. She has travelled so far along the road of autonomy that she has now created the germ of a Canadian diplomatic service; and she has recently sent to Washington a diplomatic envoy of her own. In the Great War the maple leaf badge came to be recognized as the symbol of a strong national spirit which never failed before any task with which it was confronted, and which contributed in a substantial measure to the breaking down of the German defences in the latter half of 1918. Canada's war effort was distinctly a national effort, the extent and quality of which was determined by the national will; and the direct result of this effort has been that Canada has been assigned, not only a place in the Assembly of the League of Nations, but has been pronounced eligible for election to the Council of the League. This means, if it means anything, that Canada has now not only achieved a national consciousness, but has won from the rest of the world—not even excepting the United States—the recognition of this national consciousness.

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It is the object of this essay to explain—if only in a tentative way—how this national feeling came into existence.

II. ORIGINS

"A country defended by *free men*, enthusiastically devoted to the cause of their King and Constitution, cannot be conquered."—ISAAC BROCK, Address to the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada, 1812.

IN the beginning was geography. The influence of geography on Canadian history, and especially the influence of the Atlantic Ocean, has been at all stages profound; but in no way more so than in stimulating the growth of Canadian national feeling. Even in the period of French rule, the distance between the Old World and the New—a distance much greater in those days of sailing-ships than in these of steamships, trans-Atlantic cables, and wireless telegraphy—together with the wide variance between the geographical conditions prevailing in the two continents, produced in Canada signs of a distinct local feeling. This local feeling did not reach in New France the height which it reached in the English colonies to the south, where it contributed to bring about the American Revolution; but toward the end of the French

period it became much stronger than is sometimes realized. Ample evidence of it is to be found in the letters of Montcalm, those beautiful epistles which the devoted hero wrote home to his beloved Candiac. "I am extolled," he complains in one letter, written not long after his arrival in Canada, "in order to foster Canadian prejudice." The unhappy relations between Montcalm, the commander of the French regulars, and Vaudreuil, the Canadian-born governor, were reflected in the relations between the French and the Canadian officers of lesser rank. The Canadian captains of militia, most of them veterans of many a border foray and Indian battle, ranked junior to the youngest subaltern of the regular forces newly arrived from France, and perhaps without active service of any kind; and this fact alone served to excite a distinctive Canadian feeling.

After the British conquest, the influence of geography continued to operate among the French Canadians, until in the beginning of the nineteenth century it bore fruit in the ideal of *la nation canadienne*. But among the

English-speaking Canadians its influence was for many years less noticeable. It is only among a native-born population that geographical factors find full play; and it was not until well on in the nineteenth century that there was any considerable native-born English-speaking population in Canada. By this time, however, distance was being annihilated by the steamship and the trans-Atlantic cable; and Quebec had become, humanly speaking, almost as near Westminster as some places, such as outlying parts of the Orkneys and the Hebrides, which were included in the United Kingdom. None the less, the influence of geography in the English period has continued profound. The whole movement toward Canadian autonomy—so closely intertwined with the growth of Canadian nationalism as to be almost indistinguishable from it—owes a large part of its success to the three thousand miles of sundering seas between Canada and Great Britain. If Great Britain has been willing to grant Home Rule to Canada, but not so readily to Ireland, the reason in large measure lies upon the map. In the same way

the growth of Canadian national feeling even to-day owes much to the barrier of the Atlantic—a barrier that has made it all but impossible for the overwhelming majority of native-born Canadians to see and know at first hand the country from which their stock has sprung. In a thousand ways, in matters of speech and dress, and diet, and amusements, and even thought, Canadian national feeling is still being moulded from day to day by the stubborn facts of geography.

But geography alone will not serve to explain the growth of Canadian nationalism. It will not serve even to explain the political lines which Canadian nationalism has followed. The boundary between Canada and the United States, for example, cannot be referred to purely geographical causes. What chiefly determined the lines of the new nationality was a series of political events which took place in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The first of these, of course, was the Peace of Paris in 1763, which eliminated France from North America, and placed all the country between Hudson Bay

and the Gulf of Mexico under the British flag. The second was the American Revolution, which removed from the sovereignty of Great Britain the thirteen original British colonies in America, and left the northern half of the continent open for a new experiment in colonial government—an experiment which was destined in the end to give full play to the forces of colonial nationalism. And the third event was the French Revolution, which severed the tie of sympathy binding the French Canadians to France. These three events combined to fashion the mould of the nationality that was to be.

The first impetus to the growth of Canadian national feeling was given by the War of 1812. This war—in other respects one of the most futile and meaningless in history—had at any rate this result, that it gave birth in Canada to that feeling of self-reliance and self-respect without which no strong national spirit can well exist. In 1812 British North America found itself the innocent victim of an attack by a foreign country which sought to conquer it, a country with a vastly superior

population, and with an army in which the enlistments during the war actually exceeded the total population of all the British colonies in North America; and yet three years later, after a prolonged struggle, the war ended with the Canadian frontier everywhere intact. However pacifists may lament the fact, there is no formula for the creation of nationalism so efficacious as a war such as this, waged against outside aggression under heavy odds. Scottish nationalism dates from the Scottish War of Independence; Italian nationalism from the Italian War of Liberation; and the nationalism of the United States from the War of the American Revolution. In the same way the War of 1812—which might fittingly be termed the Canadian War of Independence—stands at the fountain-head of Canadian nationalism. It is a sound instinct which has led Canadians to cherish the memories of what were, from the standpoint of the military historian, the trivial skirmishes of Detroit and Queenston Heights, of Châteauguay and Chrysler's Farm; for these engagements are the title-deeds of Canadian nationality.

But this aspect of the War of 1812 does not exhaust its importance in fostering national feeling in Canada. Just as the American invasion of Canada in 1775 had resulted in purging Canada at that time of the disloyal and pro-American element in her population, so the War of 1812 resulted in removing from Canadian soil those who were at that time unsympathetic with Canadian ideals; and just as had been the case in 1775, so in 1812 the defence of their common country bound together with the bond of common sacrifices and common memories "the two races" in Canada, the English-Canadian and the French-Canadian. For the second time in half a century English and French in Canada had fought shoulder to shoulder against the southern invader; and it might well have seemed that a union begun so auspiciously, and sanctified so solemnly, would be proof against the shocks of time. In other cases, in the case of Scotland, of Switzerland, and of Belgium, a war of national defence has welded into a coherent whole the most diverse racial and linguistic elements; and, especially

in view of the very amicable relations that had existed between the English and the French in Canada during the first half-century of British rule, it might have been expected that a similar result would have ensued in Canada.

Such hopes, however, were to some extent doomed to disappointment. In the twenty-five years that followed 1812, there sprang up in Canada a political conflict which in Lower Canada transformed itself into a struggle between "the two races"—a struggle of such character that when Lord Durham came to Canada in 1838 he professed to find "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state". The results of this quarrel, some of which are far from extinct to-day, cannot be too greatly deplored; nor is it well to attempt to minimize them. And yet, on the other hand, it is an even greater mistake to exaggerate them. When one considers the history of countries like Ireland, Poland, and the Balkans, where peoples similarly diverse in language, religion, and historical traditions have been placed in juxtaposition, one is forced to the conclusion that, after all, the

French and the English in Canada have not got on badly together. The Rebellion of 1837 was the only occasion on which the two peoples have come into anything like armed conflict; and it was far from being a revolt of the whole of the French-Canadian people. It was limited to only one or two districts, and the whole weight of the French-Canadian church was thrown against it. It was, moreover, an accident, directly due to a faulty constitution, which forced the two peoples in Lower Canada into opposite camps, and gave each a weapon with which to smite the other. It is wrong, therefore, to regard the struggle of 1837 as having interposed an insuperable barrier against the growth of a common spirit between the English and the French in Canada. Even if it is admitted that the events which culminated in the Rebellion of 1837 have created two nationalisms in Canada, an English-Canadian and a French-Canadian, there is nothing in this fact to prevent the growth in Canada of what some modern writers have called a super-nationalism, such as exists in Great Britain

between the subordinate nationalisms of England, Scotland, and Wales. Indeed, as we shall see, there is ample evidence to show that such a supernationalism really exists in Canada to-day.

From another viewpoint, moreover, the Rebellion of 1837 actually contributed to the growth of Canadian national feeling, for it resulted in the grant to Canada of self-government. As Edward Blake pointed out in his famous Aurora speech of 1874, "It is impossible to foster a national spirit unless you have national interests to attend to." The growth of Canadian self-government, which began under Lord Sydenham in 1841, and which has been going on ever since, gave Canadians distinct national interests to attend to, and so encouraged the growth of a distinct national spirit. It led between 1841 and 1849 to the control by Canadians of their own domestic affairs; it led between 1849 and 1859 to Canada's fiscal independence of the Mother Country; and it is leading in our own day to a degree of political autonomy which is practically complete. It is true that in the struggle

for self-government the element of nationalism did not at first appear on the surface, except perhaps in Lower Canada. The newspaper in which William Lyon Mackenzie carried on his political agitation was frankly named *The Colonial Advocate*. Yet even in the early Reformers the yeast of nationalism was no doubt working unseen. The very fact of the struggle for self-government was in itself an evidence of the inarticulate growth of a national consciousness. The infant, as yet unborn, was stirring within the womb.

III. NATIONAL UNITY

"I see in the not remote distance one great nationality, bound, like the shield of Achilles, by the blue rim of Ocean."—THOMAS D'ARCY McGEE, Speech in the Legislative Assembly of Canada, 1862.

THE greatest single factor in the growth of Canadian national feeling has been no doubt the movement toward national unity, or, as it is more commonly described in Canada, the movement toward Confederation: a movement which was crowned with success between the years 1867 and 1873, and which, curiously enough, virtually synchronized with the national unification of Germany and Italy. The idea of the confederation of the British North American provinces dates far back in Canadian history. It was first advocated by a British engineer officer, Lieut.-Col. Robert Morse, as early as 1784, immediately after the close of the American Revolution.¹ It was urged on the British government by Lord Dorchester and by Chief Justice William Smith in 1790, when the details of the

¹ Can. Arch. Report, 1884, p. liii.

Constitutional Act were under consideration. It became popular among a number of the United Empire Loyalists; and in the twenties of last century it found advocates in persons so different as William Lyon Mackenzie and the Rev. John Strachan. But none of these early advocates of Confederation appear to have thought of the project in terms of nationalism. It is not until we come to Lord Durham's *Report on the Affairs of British North America*—that classic of English political literature—that we find the relation between national unity and the growth of national feeling clearly pointed out.

Lord Durham, in recommending the union of Upper and Lower Canada, insisted at the same time—and this fact is too often forgotten—that the Act of Union should contain a provision whereby “any or all of the other North American colonies may, on the application of the Legislature, be, with the consent of the two Canadas, or their united Legislature, admitted into the union on such terms as may be agreed between them”. He regarded, in fact, the union of Upper and

Lower Canada as merely a half-way house on the road to Confederation. And the bearing of Confederation on the growth of colonial nationalism he was quick to discern:

Such an union would at once decisively settle the question of races; it would enable all the Provinces to co-operate for all common purposes; and, above all, it would form a great and powerful people, possessing the means of securing good and responsible government for itself, and which, under the protection of the British Empire, might in some measure counterbalance the preponderant and increasing influence of the United States on the American continent. . . . I am, in truth, so far from believing that the increased power and weight that would be given to these colonies by union would endanger their connection with the Empire, that I look to it as the only means of fostering such a national feeling throughout them as would effectually counterbalance whatever tendencies may now exist toward separation.¹

After describing the pro-American influences then at work in Canada he went on:

If we wish to prevent the extension of this influence, it can only be done by raising up for

¹ Lucas (ed.), *Lord Durham's Report*, vol. ii, p. 309.

the North American colonist some nationality of his own; by elevating these small and unimportant communities into a society having some objects of a national importance; and by thus giving their inhabitants a country which they will be unwilling to see absorbed even into one more powerful.¹

In these words we have, it would appear, the first clear enunciation of a nationalist programme for Canadians. It is true, no doubt, that Lord Durham's version of Canadian nationalism was too limited, too exclusively English—that it did not give to the French-Canadians the place to which they were entitled in the new nationality. But Lord Durham's title to the honour of being the first exponent of the principle of nationalism in Canada is indisputable. Here, as elsewhere, he stands at the head of a long process of development in Canadian history.

The ideal of Confederation, as Durham himself had feared, was not destined to become immediately practicable. The union of Upper and Lower Canada was brought about in 1841; but in the other provinces

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. ii, p. 311.

sectional feeling was still too strong, and between them the means of communication were still too slight, to permit of Confederation being achieved. There was lacking both the psychological and the physical basis of Canadian national unity. It was not, indeed, until long after Durham's day that the idea invaded the sphere of practical politics. In 1849 it appeared as a plank in the platform of the British American League, an association formed partly for the purpose of rehabilitating the shattered fortunes of the Tory party. In 1854 Joseph Howe, in his famous speech on "The Organization of the Empire", discussed the idea at some length, and admitted that "there would be great advantages arising from a union of these colonies". In 1858 several events combined to bring the project into the public eye. In the first place, A. T. Galt, the Canadian finance minister who successfully vindicated the fiscal independence of Canada, and whose protectionist ideas were merely the expression in the economic sphere of his nationalist aspirations, entered the Macdonald-Cartier administration in that

year on the understanding that Confederation would be made a feature of the government's programme; and a delegation composed of Galt, Cartier, and Ross was actually sent to England that autumn with a view to ascertaining the views of the British government with regard to Confederation—though unfortunately, thanks to the apathetic immobility of the British government, the delegation resulted in nothing. In the second place, it was in this year that Alexander Morris—a statesman whose fame has fled all too soon—published his lecture on *Nova Britannia; or, The Consolidation of the British North American Provinces*; and lastly, it was in this year that there came into the Canadian legislature a young Irish patriot, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, with whose name, more perhaps than with any other, the vision of the new Dominion was destined to be associated. In a short-lived journal which he had founded in Montreal in 1857, and which bore the significant name of *The New Era*, McGee had already embraced the gospel of British-American union; and this gospel he did not cease to

preach, in season and out of season, with all the rare genius and eloquence at his command, until it came true.

In the writings and speeches of McGee, Morris, and their friends, there now appeared, for the first time in Canadian history, a strong nationalist note. Morris, in the peroration of his *Nova Britannia*, urged his hearers to "cherish and promote by all means the spread of national sentiment"; and McGee, in one of the early numbers of his *New Era*, struck out a phrase—"The New Nationality"—which was destined to become historic. Trained in the vivid school of Irish nationalism, McGee merely transferred to Canadian soil his nationalist aspirations. To give an adequate idea of the crusade which McGee carried out, is impossible in a sketch of this sort; but two or three extracts from his speeches may be quoted in order to illustrate the character of his propaganda. Speaking in the Canadian legislature in 1860 on the constitutional relations of Upper and Lower Canada, he was reported to have spoken thus:

We had advanced a certain way on the road to nationality, and all the power of the Legislature could not stop it, though it might retard it. He looked forward to the day when we should be known, not as Upper and Lower Canadians, Nova Scotians, or New Brunswickians, but as members of a nation designated as the Six United Provinces.¹

In 1862, in a speech delivered at a popular festival in Quebec, he spoke thus:

A Canadian nationality—not French-Canadian, nor British-Canadian, nor Irish-Canadian: patriotism rejects the prefix—is, in my opinion, what we should look forward to, that is what we ought to labour for, that is what we ought to be prepared to defend to the death.²

He even carried the fiery cross down into the Maritime Provinces. In an address delivered in Halifax in 1863, he took as his theme “a future, possible, probable, and I hope to be able to live to say positive, British-Canadian Nationality”:

What do we need to construct such a nationality? Territory, resources by land and sea, civil and religious freedom, these we have already.

¹ Thompson's *Mirror of Parliament*, 1860, No. 38, p. 3.

² T. D'Arcy McGee, *Speeches and Addresses chiefly on the subject of British-American Union*, p. 63.

Four millions we already are: four millions culled from races that, for a thousand years, have led the van of Christendom. . . . Analyze our aggregate population: we have more Saxons than Alfred had when he founded the English realm. We have more Celts than Brien had when he put his heel on the neck of Odin. We have more Normans than William had when he marshalled his invading host along the strand of Falaise. We have the laws of St. Edward and St. Louis, *Magna Charta* and the Roman Code. We speak the speeches of Shakespeare and Bossuet. We copy the constitution which Burke and Somers and Sidney and Sir Thomas More lived, or died, to secure or save. Out of these august elements, in the name of the future generations who shall inhabit all the vast regions we now call ours, I invoke the fortunate genius of a United British America.¹

D'Arcy McGee was, in truth, the Mazzini of Canadian national unity; and by his fervent appeals to the younger generation of Canadians he gathered about him a rising nationalist school, a party of Young Canada.

Thus was created the psychological basis of Confederation. The physical basis had

¹ *The Honorable Thomas D'Arcy McGee of Montreal* (pamphlet, n.d.), p. 21.

already been created with the coming of the railway era. In 1852 the Grand Trunk Railway had been incorporated; and by 1860 its line of steel had linked Lake Huron with the Atlantic. The Intercolonial Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway were still projects of the future; but engineering science had demonstrated the possibility of railway communications which rendered obsolete the difficulties of an earlier day. During the same period the establishment of telegraphs contributed toward the same end. By 1864 provincial isolation was a thing of the past, and Confederation had become a physical possibility. But yet neither psychological nor engineering developments might of themselves have brought the Dominion of Canada into existence had there not occurred in 1864, in Old Canada, a political deadlock which forced the question of Confederation to the fore. "The true parent of Confederation," as Goldwin Smith said, "was Deadlock."

This deadlock arose directly from a provision in the Act of 1841 which united Upper and Lower Canada. It was laid down in this

Act that in the united Legislative Assembly there should be equal representation of both parts of the province—forty-two members from Upper and from Lower Canada alike. In 1841 this arrangement worked to the advantage of Upper Canada, which had at that time the smaller population; but by 1851 the boot had shifted to the other foot. By this time Upper Canada had the larger population. Under these circumstances, a demand sprang up in Upper Canada for the revision of the Act of Union, and the adoption of the principle of “representation by population”. The cry of “Rep. by Pop.” was taken up by the Liberals, under the leadership of George Brown, the energetic and dominating editor of the Toronto *Globe*, and within a short time it had gained widespread support in Upper Canada. At the same time, as may be imagined, it was not popular in Lower Canada, the more especially since George Brown linked the demand for “Rep. by Pop.” with the cry of French Roman Catholic domination. George Brown came to command a majority in the English-speaking part of the province,

while John A. Macdonald and George E. Cartier, the Conservative leaders, commanded a majority in the French part of the province. Under these conditions, government became increasingly difficult. Between 1860 and 1864 there were four successive administrations, and two general elections, but without any decisive result. Parties were so evenly divided, and the two parts of the province so bitterly arrayed against each other, that anarchy seemed not far distant.

At this juncture, Lord Monck, the Governor-General of Canada, conceived the idea of bringing about a coalition of parties with a view to finding a way out of the impasse. The chief difficulty was in bringing together John A. Macdonald and George Brown. These two men had become bitter personal enemies, and were not even on bowing terms with each other. Brown had in his newspaper consistently traduced Macdonald for many years, even going to the length of holding him up to public opprobrium on account of his fondness for Scotch whiskey; whereupon Macdonald had retorted, with stinging sarcasm, that he

knew the people of Canada would rather have "John A. drunk than George Brown sober". Thanks, however, to the good offices of Alexander Morris and some of the other nationalists, Macdonald and Brown were now brought together, and both agreed to sink their personal differences for the sake of the common weal. They joined in forming what is known as the "Great Coalition"; they took part together in the negotiations which culminated in the Quebec Conference of October, 1864; and until Brown's resignation from the government at the end of 1865, they were to all appearances harmonious colleagues. "We acted together," said Macdonald many years later, in describing their temporary alliance, "dined in public places together, played euchre in crossing the Atlantic, and went into society in England together. And yet on the day after he (Brown) resigned, we resumed our old positions and ceased to speak."

Much has been made of the self-sacrificing way in which Macdonald and Brown put aside their private animosities in order to make Confederation possible. Their patriotic

behaviour was in itself an evidence of the growing national feeling among Canadian public men; and there is no doubt that their temporary union made Confederation possible. But the part they played should not be allowed to obscure, as it has hitherto done, the contribution of D'Arcy McGee. Nor was their self-abnegation greater than his; for when difficulties arose after Confederation in the formation of the first Dominion cabinet, McGee, who was regarded as the representative of the Roman Catholic English-speaking element in the province of Quebec, stood aside, in order that the claims of the English-speaking Roman Catholics might be combined with those of the Nova Scotians, in the appointment of a compromise candidate whose name is now forgotten. When, therefore, the first parliament of the new Dominion met in Ottawa in 1868, the high priest of Canadian nationalism—the Fenian journalist who more than any one else had taught Canadians to be at one with themselves—was a private member of the House. This fact, and the fact that in 1869 McGee's career was cut short by the

hand of the assassin, serve perhaps to explain the neglect into which his fame has fallen. That there were those in his own generation, however, who understood the significance of his brief but meteoric passage through Canadian history, is evident from the words in which, in 1872, the author of *Canada First* paid tribute to his memory:

There is a name I would fain approach with befitting reverence, for it casts athwart memory the shadow of all those qualities that man admires in man. It tells of one in whom the generous enthusiasm of youth was but mellowed by the experience of cultured manhood; of one who lavished the warm love of an Irish heart on the land of his birth, yet gave a loyal and true affection to the land of his adoption; who strove with all the power of genius to convert the stagnant pool of politics into a stream of living water; who dared to be national in the face of provincial selfishness, and impartially liberal in the teeth of sectarian strife; who from Halifax to Sandwich sowed broadcast the seeds of a higher national life, and with persuasive eloquence drew us closer together as a people, pointing out to each what was good in the other, wreathing our sympathies and blending our hopes; yes! one who breathed into our New

Dominion the spirit of a proud self-reliance, and first taught Canadians to respect themselves. Was it a wonder that a cry of agony rang throughout the land when murder, foul and most unnatural, drank the life-blood of Thomas D'Arcy McGee?¹

Among the documents illustrating the growth of Canadian nationalism, there is none of greater interest or importance than the record of the debates which took place on Confederation in the Canadian legislature in 1865. In these debates there were those, like Christopher Dunkin, who refused, as we have seen, to believe not only in the existence, but even in the possibility of an all-Canadian national feeling. Even among the partisans of Confederation, there were comparatively few who seem to have thought of Confederation in terms of nationalism. John A. Macdonald spoke of it as "founding a great nation", and he prophesied that under Confederation "England will have in us a friendly

¹ *Canada First: A Memorial*, p. 42. There have recently been published, however, two biographies of McGee which do justice to the part he played in Confederation: Isabel Skelton, *The Life of Thomas D'Arcy McGee* (Gardenvale, 1925), and Alexander Brady, *Thomas D'Arcy McGee* (Toronto, 1925).

nation"; but these references, true as they were to the coming event, were hardly more than incidental. In the speeches of George Brown, Alexander Mackenzie, and even—strange as it may seem—A. T. Galt, there is hardly anything which can be construed as a nationalist confession of faith. Apart from McGee, Morris, and one or two other nationalists, the only outstanding figure in the House who dealt at length with the nationalistic aspect of Confederation was George Etienne Cartier; and Cartier's defence of the doctrine of "the new nationality"—a phrase which had been incorporated in the Speech from the Throne—was so sound and salutary, so in line with the most recent results of modern thought, so full of lessons for Canadians to-day, that it is worth while quoting at length:

The question for us to ask ourselves was this: Shall we be content to remain separate—shall we be content to maintain a mere provincial existence, when, by combining together, we could become a great nation? . . . Objection had been taken to the scheme now under consideration, because of the words "new nationality". Now, when we were united together, if union

were attained, we would form a political nationality with which neither the national origin, nor the religion of any individual would interfere. It was lamented by some that we had this diversity of races, and hopes were expressed that this distinctive feature would cease. The idea of unity of races was utopian—it was impossible. Distinctions of this kind would always exist. . . . But with regard to the objection based on this fact, to the effect that a great nation could not be formed because Lower Canada was in great part French and Catholic, and Upper Canada was British and Protestant, and the Lower Provinces were mixed, it was futile and worthless in the extreme. Look, for instance, at the United Kingdom, inhabited as it was by three great races. (Hear, hear.) Had the diversity of race impeded the glory, the wealth, the progress of England? Had they not rather each contributed their share to the greatness of the Empire? Of the glories of the senate, the field, and the ocean, of the successes of trade and commerce, how much was contributed by the combined talents, energy and courage of the three races together? (Cheers.) In our own Federation we should have Catholic and Protestant, English, French, Irish, Scotch, and each by his efforts and his success would increase the prosperity and glory of the new Confederacy.

(Hear, hear.) He viewed the diversity of races in British North America in this way: we were of different races, not for the purpose of warring against each other, but in order to compete and emulate for the general welfare. (Cheers.) We could not do away with the distinctions of race. We could not legislate for the disappearance of the French Canadians from American soil, but British and French Canadians could appreciate and understand their position relative to each other. They were placed like great families beside each other, and their contact produced a healthy spirit of emulation. It was a benefit rather than otherwise that we had a diversity of races.¹

In these striking words Cartier pinned his faith to the doctrine of an all-Canadian nationalism, and implicitly disowned the ideal of an *intransigeant* French-Canadian nationalism, the advocates of which he described as "self-styled nationalists". That he, the French-Canadian leader of the House, should have been the first among the leading politicians of that day to embrace whole-heartedly the idea of "the new nationality", and that he should have given that idea such a sound

¹ *Parliamentary Debates on the subject of Confederation*, p. 60.

philosophical basis, is a fact which English Canadians to-day might do well to ponder.

The Confederation of Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia was accomplished in 1867. But this was only the first instalment of Confederation. Within the surprisingly short space of four years, the new Dominion extended itself westward to the Pacific. In 1869 it acquired by purchase the vast territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, and in 1871 the colony of British Columbia came into Confederation. This westward extension of Canada, even more than the original Confederation, was a factor of profound importance in stimulating the growth of Canadian national feeling. The Great North-West was Canada's heritage. It had been originally explored and occupied by Canadian fur-traders and officials in the days of the French régime; and it had been at that time, to all intents and purposes, part of Canada. As Alexander Morris pointed out in the Canadian parliament in 1867, "Canada was bound to the North-West by the ties of discovery, possession, and interest. . . . The country is

ours by right of inheritance.” The North-West was, in fact, a sort of *Canada Irredenta*, to the redemption of which the Canadian nationalists of those days looked forward as to the goal of their aspirations. More than this, however, the North-West was a land of promise, the possibilities of which captivated the imagination. It was there that the listener could hear

the tread of pioneers,
Of nations yet to be,
The first low wash of waves, where soon
Shall roll a human sea.

The way in which the acquisition of the North-West set on fire the minds of the nationalists of the Confederation epoch is well illustrated in the lecture on *The Hudson's Bay and Pacific Territories*,¹ which Alexander Morris delivered and published in 1858—a lecture which occupies in the literature of Canadian nationalism a place of scarcely less importance than his *Nova Britannia*. “Our Northern rising nationality,” he exclaimed, *à propos* of the West, “has an example field before it—a bril-

¹ Reprinted in Morris, *Nova Britannia*.

liant future in the distance." And in his peroration he asked:

Who can doubt of the future of these British Provinces, or of the entire and palpable reality of that vision which rises so grandly before us of the Great British Empire of the North . . . with its face to the south and its back to the pole, with its right and left resting on the Atlantic and the Pacific, and with the telegraph and the iron road connecting the two oceans?

Canadian nationalism differs from the nationalisms of the Old World in this, that while they draw their inspiration largely from the past, it draws its inspiration mainly from the future. Writers on nationalism, with their eyes fixed on Old World conditions, have laid great stress on common language, common religion, and common historical traditions as factors in nationalism, and they have as a rule ignored the factor of common hopes for the future. Yet this is one of the most important elements in New World nationalism. And if this is so, if Canadian national feeling has its eyes set on the mountain-tops of promise, rather than on the valleys of achievement, the fact is in large measure due

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to the vista of possibilities opened up by Confederation, and especially by that crowning phase of Confederation, the acquisition of the Great West.

IV. THE “CANADA FIRST” MOVEMENT

“There have been found those whose patriotism enables them to rise above the murky, often polluted atmosphere of partyism, and look only at the welfare of the Dominion.”—
WILLIAM CANNIFF, *Canadian Nationality, its Growth and Development* (Toronto, 1875).

CONFEDERATION was hardly completed when there sprang up in Canada an organized movement of an avowedly nationalist character. This movement—known from its motto as “Canada First”—made only a brief attempt to invade the arena of party politics, and it left no lasting impress on Canadian political history. For this reason it has received scant attention at the hands of most Canadian historians. Yet it was a movement of profound significance in Canadian history; and certainly in any account of the growth of Canadian national feeling, it must occupy a place of primary importance.

Canada First had its origin in the chance meeting in Ottawa in the spring of 1868 of

five young men.¹ These five, all of whom were native Canadians, and only one of whom was over thirty years of age, were Henry J. Morgan, the writer; Charles Mair, the poet; Robert J. Haliburton, the eldest son of the author of *Sam Slick*; George T. Denison, a member of an old United Empire Loyalist family; and W. A. Foster, a Toronto barrister, with whose name more perhaps than with any other the new movement came to be connected. Though they came from all parts of the Dominion the five men quickly became warm friends, and they fell into the habit of meeting frequently in Morgan's rooms to discuss the future of the new Confederation. They were all agreed on the necessity of fostering by all means possible a national spirit in Canada as the surest bond of unity which Canadians could have; and before they separated, they pledged one another that they would do all in their power to encourage the

¹ The best first-hand account of the Canada First movement is to be found in Colonel George T. Denison's *The Struggle for Imperial Unity*, Toronto, 1909. Another account, less full, and from a different angle, will be found in Goldwin Smith's introduction to *Canada First: A Memorial of the late William A. Foster, Q.C.*, Toronto, 1890.

growth of national sentiment. Mair went soon afterwards to the North-West, whence he contributed to the Toronto *Globe* a series of articles intended to inspire Canadians with a sense of the greatness of their heritage. Haliburton went on tour through Ontario, Quebec, and his native Nova Scotia, lecturing on inter-provincial trade and other subjects having a bearing on national feeling; and Denison prepared a lecture on *The Duty of Canadians to Canada* which he delivered in many places throughout Ontario, and even in Halifax, though here—it is interesting to note—under an altered title. Gradually new members were added to the little group—Schultz of Manitoba, Edgar of Toronto, and a few others—until it acquired the nickname of “The Twelve Apostles”.

In 1870 the group, feeling the need for some definite organization, which would yet be non-political in character, formed the North-West Emigration Aid Society. This society became a sort of stalking-horse for what now came to be known among its members as the “Canada First” party. The name

“Canada First” seems to have originated with Edgar and Denison; Edgar suggested as the motto for the Twelve Apostles, “Canada before all, or Canada first of all”, and Denison seized on the phrase, “Canada First”. But the name did not obtain general currency until the publication in 1871 of Foster’s now famous lecture entitled *Canada First; or, Our New Nationality*. Foster, who was of a retiring disposition, had hitherto limited his efforts to occasional contributions to the Toronto *Telegraph*; but at the request of his friends he at last undertook to prepare and deliver this public lecture. The lecture was published first in the Toronto *Globe*, and afterwards it was issued as a separate brochure, and from the outset it attracted widespread attention. Read in cold blood to-day, it may seem, as Goldwin Smith said, to belong “to the heydey of Confederation and of youth”, but its effect at the time was great. It embodied in passionate phrases a growing sentiment, it gave coherent shape to a floating idea, and it provided the Canadian nationalists with a rallying-point.

The first part of Foster's lecture was devoted to an eloquent survey of Canadian history, with a view to showing that the achievements of Canadians had been such as any people might take pride in. Lest, however, Canadians might vaunt themselves unduly, they were reminded that Canada was still spoken of slightly in the outside world. "The normal Old World idea respecting us and our country resolves itself into huge pictures in which frost and snow, falling timber, snow-shoes, furs, and wild Indians are the most prominent, if not the only, objects of vision." For years, moreover, British policy had "isolated the Provinces to prevent their absorption in the neighbouring Republic, and in so doing stunted the growth of a native national sentiment". Consequently, even among Canadians themselves there were those who had little confidence in the future of their country. "There are too many Cassandras in our midst; too many who whimper over our supposed weakness and exaggerate others' supposed strength." What was needed was the encouragement of a strong national spirit.

"Unless we intend to be hewers of wood and drawers of water until the end, we should in right earnest set about strengthening the foundations of our identity." That there were difficulties in the way was not denied. "There are asperities of race, of creed, of interest to be allayed, and a composite people to be rendered homogeneous." But the task of fusing and blending the diverse elements in Canada was pronounced to be less difficult than it seemed. All that was needed was "some common basis of agreement strong enough to counteract disintegrating tendencies"; and this common basis, it was affirmed, was to be found in an all-Canadian national feeling.

During the two or three years which followed the publication of Foster's address, it was frequently suggested that Canada First should organize itself as a definite political party. The wiser heads of the party, realizing that to do so would embroil them with the older political parties, preferred to exert an influence through less formal channels. It was, indeed, one of the earliest articles in the

creed of Canada First that partyism was an evil, and that an attempt ought to be made to get back to the golden days

When none was for a party,
When all were for the State.

Gradually, however, the temptation to invade the political arena became too strong to be resisted. In the autumn of 1873, Thomas Moss, one of the Canada First men, was nominated as the Liberal candidate for the representation of West Toronto in the House of Commons, and though Canada First did not join his organization, it gave him its hearty support and held a meeting in his favour. At this meeting Foster spoke, and moved a resolution which openly advocated the formation of a "Canadian National party". The resolution was passed with enthusiasm, and it bore fruit a short time later, on January 6, 1874, in the formation of the Canadian National Association. The new association, which was avowedly political in character, included in its membership not only the original Canada First men, but also a large number of new associates. Foster, however, still remained

the guiding spirit of the party. It was he, apparently, who drafted the platform of the National Association. This platform is, without question, one of the most interesting documents in Canadian political history, not only because it summarizes the ideas of the Canada First party, but because of the uncanny way in which it anticipates the lines along which Canada was destined to develop. In its published form the platform ran as follows:

- (1) British Connection, Consolidation of the Empire, and in the meantime a voice in treaties affecting Canada.
- (2) Closer trade relations with the British West India Islands, with a view to ultimate political connection.
- (3) Income Franchise.
- (4) The Ballot, with the addition of compulsory voting.
- (5) A Scheme for the Representation of Minorities.
- (6) Encouragement of Immigration and Free Homesteads in the Public Domain.
- (7) The imposition of duties for Revenue so adjusted as to afford every possible encouragement for Native Industry.

- (8) An improved Militia System, under the command of trained Dominion officers.
- (9) No Property Qualifications in Members of the House of Commons.
- (10) The Reorganization of the Senate.
- (11) Pure and Economic Administration of Public Affairs.

In this platform the first and eighth planks forecast important phases of the growth of Canadian autonomy; the sixth anticipates the immigration policy of the last quarter of a century; the seventh contains in germ the doctrine of the National Policy; and a number of others call for reforms which are being mooted to-day.

The entrance of Canada First into the sphere of practical politics at first promised well. Thomas Moss was elected for West Toronto, and the hopes of Canada First rose high. In 1874 the leaders of Canada First founded a weekly journal, significantly named *The Nation*, as the organ of their party, and they founded also the National Club in Toronto, in which it was intended that Canadians of all parties might meet together on a broad national basis. Finally, in 1874 Canada

First found, or thought it found, a leader of the first rank in Edward Blake, whose reputation was at that time nearing its meridian. Blake had broken with Alexander Mackenzie and George Brown, and on October 3, 1874, he delivered at Aurora, Ontario, a speech¹—still famous as “the Aurora speech”—which aligned him unmistakably with the party of Canada First. The Aurora speech was, indeed, little more than an amplification of the platform of the Canadian National Association. Blake preached the federation of the Empire, the reorganization of the Senate, compulsory voting, extension of the franchise, representation of minorities, and, above all, the cultivation of a national spirit. “The future of Canada, I believe,” he said, “depends very largely upon the cultivation of a national spirit. We must find some common ground on which to unite, some common aspiration to be shared, and I think it can be alone found in the cultivation of that spirit.”

¹ Published, together with numerous press comments, as a pamphlet (Ottawa, 1874), under the title *A National Sentiment*.

The delight of Canada First, when Edward Blake thus put himself at its head, was unbounded. It seemed as though the party were on the eve of a great future. In an address before the Canadian National Association in February, 1875, Foster seems to have looked forward to the break-up of the old-line political parties. "When a matter of great importance is brought home to the minds of the people," he said, "the withes of party become as tow. This is our encouragement and the source of our hope."

But the hope was hollow. In the autumn of 1875, Edward Blake—his hot fit of insurgency having cooled off—went back into the Liberal camp, and again accepted office in the Mackenzie administration. The defection proved a sore blow to Canada First as a political party. It was as though the captain of the host had deserted in the face of the foe.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,

Just for a ribband to stick in his coat.

The members of the party lost heart, and the party itself gradually broke up. At the end of 1875 *The Nation* ceased publication.

The National Club became a purely social organization. The Canadian National Association disappeared from view. Foster, who had never loved the limelight, withdrew within the circle of professional and domestic life; and the other members of the party drifted off, some of them to follow strange gods, such as independence, or annexation, or imperial centralization.

The truth probably is that Canada First never had a real chance of life as a political party. So long as it remained an intellectual movement it was able to continue its work undisturbed, but once it entered the political battlefield it roused the jealousy and suspicion of the two older political parties, and so drew on itself a concentrated fire from two sides. The vitriolic vehemence with which the official organs of both the Liberal and Conservative parties attacked the political platform of Canada First is one of the most amusing things in Canadian political history, especially in view of the fact that both these parties afterwards plundered the Canada First platform for most of their ideas. But in 1875 it

was difficult for a nascent political party to meet this combined attack, and the more so since, by this time, divisions had begun to appear in the party itself. Some of the original members, such as Denison, had withdrawn when political action was decided on. Others interpreted the meaning of Canadian nationalism in different ways, some leaning towards nativism, others toward annexation or independence, others toward imperial unity. Consequently, Canada First as a political movement probably died a pre-ordained death. And this was, no doubt, fortunate, for the failure of Canada First as an organized party definitely eliminated the doctrine of nationalism from party politics in Canada. Had Canada First succeeded, it would have become in time a political party like any other; nationalism would have become the badge of a party rather than of the whole people; the common spirit would have become a contradiction of itself. As it was, the influence of Canada First continued to operate in a purer and rarer atmosphere. The ideas which the Twelve Apostles had set out to

preach to an unbelieving world have come in time to pervade the minds of all Canadians, to come to them as naturally as the air they breathe. As Charles Mair wrote in his lines in memory of Foster in 1888,

The seed they sowed has sprung at last,
And grows and blossoms through the land.

V. NATIONAL AUTONOMY AND THE “NATIONAL POLICY”

“The two political parties of the Dominion, although often more concerned about the success of party than the interests of the country, have learned that they will best serve party purposes by giving utterance to Canadian sentiment.”—WILLIAM CANNIFF, *Canadian Nationality, its Growth and Development* (Toronto, 1875).

TO ATTEMPT to measure the growth of national feeling since the days of Canada First is impossible. There is no gauge for the things of the spirit. But that growth is written all over the political and economic history of Canada since 1875, and in particular it is seen in the development of Canadian autonomy within the Empire and in the triumph of the National Policy.

In 1874, in his Aurora speech, Edward Blake described Canadians as “four millions of Britons who are not free”. Such language was perhaps open to the charge of exaggeration, and yet it contained an element of truth. There were still at that time very considerable limitations on Canadian self-government. In the field of foreign policy and international

relations Canada was then all but voiceless. Even in regard to her domestic affairs her autonomy was far from complete. She had no power to amend her written constitution. Her legislation even in domestic matters was subject to the disallowance of the British government, and indeed the governor-general, in his instructions, was specifically commanded to reserve certain classes of bills for the signification of the royal pleasure. Canada could not control the immigration entering her ports from the British Isles; she could not legislate with regard to Canadian shipping on the high seas; she could not control copyright within her own borders. The principle was not yet fully established that she should look after her own defence, or even the suppression of internal disorders. The force which put down the Riel Rebellion of 1870 was not a Canadian, but an imperial force. British troops still garrisoned Halifax, and the command of the military forces of Canada was still vested in an imperial general officer. Even in the executive and the judicial spheres restrictions remained. The governor-general had a pre-

rogative which the Crown in England no longer enjoyed, the right of pardon; and for a final court of appeal Canadians had to go to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council at Westminster.

The process whereby these shackles on the will of the Canadian people have been, and are being, struck off one by one, began almost immediately after the political death of Canada First. Canada First, by giving up its life, saved it. For once it was eliminated as a political factor, both the old political parties took up its doctrines and strove to put them into effect. The Liberal party, under the inspiration of Edward Blake, and later of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, adopted its ideas of constitutional autonomy; while the Conservative party, under Sir John Macdonald, adopted that plank in its platform which came to bear the name of the National Policy. Both parties, indeed, might be said to have adopted the main ideas of Canada First almost entirely, for the Conservative administrations of Sir John Macdonald, Sir Joseph Thompson, and Sir Robert Borden have followed faithfully,

on the whole, the lines of constitutional development laid down by the Liberals, and the Liberal administration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier made no real attempt to reverse the National Policy. The history of Canada since Confederation has been the history of the rivalry of the two great political parties for the favour of the growing national feeling of the Canadian people.

The administration in power in 1875 in Canada was that of Alexander Mackenzie. In some respects Mackenzie's policy was anti-national, especially in regard to the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. But on the constitutional side Mackenzie was not unfavourable to Canadian nationalism. It was he who, in 1875, set up the Supreme Court of Canada as a sort of buffer between the provincial courts and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council; and it was under him, in 1878, that Edward Blake, then minister of justice, obtained from the British government important concessions in regard to the powers of the governor-general. Blake persuaded the British government to withdraw

from the governor-general not only the power of pardon but even the obligation to reserve classes of bills for the signification of the royal pleasure. This was far from being tantamount to the resignation by the British government of the power of disallowing Dominion legislation, but it marked the beginning of the period in which this power was used with greater and greater infrequency, and in which, indeed, the power may be said to have become, so far as Canada is concerned, obsolescent.

The government of Sir John Macdonald, which succeeded that of Mackenzie in 1878, made its chief contribution to the national development of Canada in the sphere of fiscal policy. It set up that protectionist system which was named, not by hazard, but by design, the National Policy—a name justified by the fact that protectionism is merely nationalism in its economic aspect. The rallying cry of the advocates of the “N.P.” was, indeed, “Canada for the Canadians”. But in some respects Macdonald’s government showed itself also not averse to national

development in the constitutional sphere. The appointment of a Canadian high commissioner at London in 1879 not only gave Canada a representative of a semi-consular nature at the centre of the Empire, but it marked also the beginning of a new era in the relations of Canada with other countries. The Canadian high commissioner came to be employed, at first in an advisory capacity, and then as a direct diplomatic representative, in the negotiation of treaties affecting Canada; and thus, through him, the right of Canada to be consulted with regard to treaties affecting her came to be admitted. In the sphere of defence, progress was made in the direction of a greater reliance by Canada on her own resources: it is noteworthy that, whereas the North-West expedition of 1870 was an imperial force, that of 1885 was Canadian. And just before the death of Macdonald in 1891, the government asserted vigorously, though unsuccessfully, the right of the Canadian parliament to legislate with regard to Canadian copyright and Canadian merchant shipping. Sir John Thompson's fight for Canadian

control of Canadian copyright, cut short by his untimely death at Windsor Castle in 1894, bade fair to place him, with Edward Blake, in the front rank of the champions of Canadian autonomy.

It was, however, during the régime of Sir Wilfrid Laurier that the development of Canadian autonomy took its greatest strides. Sir Wilfrid Laurier was one of the greatest of Canadian nationalists. Although he had opposed Confederation he loyally accepted it once it was achieved, and throughout his long political career he strove unceasingly to bring about harmony between the French and the English in Canada, to bind them together with a common national feeling. "Our respective forefathers were enemies and waged bloody war against each other for centuries," he said in his maiden speech in the Quebec legislature in 1871. "But we, their descendants, united under the same flag, fight no other fights than those of a generous emulation to excel each other in trade and industry, in the sciences and arts of peace."¹ This ideal

¹ J. S. Willison, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party*, vol. i, p. 135.

he kept steadfastly before him, and it affords indeed the key to his career. It explains, in particular, his attitude toward the position of Canada in the Empire. He conceived of the British Empire—to use his own eloquent phrase—as “a galaxy of free nations”; and both on Parliament Hill and at the repeated Imperial Conferences which he attended he resisted every attempt, from whatever quarter, to infringe upon the national autonomy of the great self-governing Dominions.

His actual contributions to the growth of Canadian autonomy were many. It was under him that the last imperial troops were withdrawn from Canada, that the fortifications at Halifax and Esquimalt were handed over to the Canadian authorities, that the military forces in Canada ceased to be commanded by an imperial officer, and that the policy of a Canadian navy was launched—that Canada, in short, assumed the full responsibility for her own defence. It was under him that the right of Canada to control and regulate British immigration was first successfully asserted by the Immigration

Act of 1910. And it was under him that the interests of Canada in connection with the signing of imperial treaties were finally safeguarded, and that Canada acquired the right of negotiating direct with foreign states in regard to commercial matters. To say, as is sometimes said, that Canada acquired the treaty-making power is not perhaps technically correct; what she obtained was the right to make informal agreements with foreign states to bring in concurrent legislation. But this was, to all intents and purposes, the equivalent of the treaty-making power in commercial matters; and in 1908 the principle was adopted that, so far as political treaties were concerned, Canada was not to be bound by any imperial treaty unless she signified her willingness to be bound by it. These developments, as is obvious, went far toward making Canada a completely autonomous nation within the British Empire, and even toward making her a unit in international politics.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier fell from power because, despite his contributions to the cause

of Canadian national autonomy, he embarked upon what was at least a partial impairment of the National Policy. His proposals for reciprocity with the United States were rejected by the national consciousness at the polls, and Sir Robert Borden came into power pledged to maintain the National Policy in its integrity. Sir Robert Borden was at first suspected of being less zealous for the cause of Canadian autonomy than for that of imperial unity, and the naval policy which he adopted in 1912 seemed perhaps to lend colour to this view. But in the end Sir Robert Borden has proved himself to be no less decided a champion of Dominion autonomy than Sir Wilfrid Laurier was. It was he who moved at the Imperial War Conference of 1917 the resolution regarding the future constitutional arrangements of the Empire which laid down the striking principle that "any readjustment of relations . . . must be based on the complete recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and must fully recognize their right to a voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations".

His greatest achievement, however, was his success at the Peace Conference of 1919 in obtaining for Canada, together with the other self-governing Dominions, separate representation in the Assembly of the League of Nations, and even the right to have its representative elected to the Council of the League. This diplomatic victory means, if it means anything, that the nationality of Canada is now recognized, not only within the circle of the British Empire, but also within the circle of international politics. It marks the crowning point in the movement toward Canadian autonomy, and it is clear that beyond this point, short of absolute independence, the ideal of Canadian autonomy within the British Empire cannot be pushed much further.

In pursuance of this ideal, Sir Robert Borden proposed, shortly before his retirement from office in 1920, the appointment of a Canadian diplomatic envoy at Washington; and an agreement was reached between London, Ottawa, and Washington as to the position which this representative should

occupy. Under the government of Mr. Arthur Meighen, who succeeded Sir Robert Borden, an appropriation was actually placed in the estimates for "Canadian representation to the United States"; but no representative was appointed, ostensibly because no suitable nominee was available. It remained for the Liberal government of Mr. Mackenzie King, five years later, to carry out Sir Robert Borden's proposal, by the appointment of Mr. Vincent Massey as Canadian minister at Washington. The terms of the agreement of 1920 have been somewhat revised; and Mr. Massey is not now, as was originally contemplated, an official in the British Embassy. But all three parties in the Dominion parliament appear to be committed to the policy of Canadian diplomatic representation in the United States; and nothing could illustrate more forcibly than this the triumph of the principle of Canadian national autonomy.

These developments could not have taken place had there not grown up in Canada during the last sixty years a strong and insistent national feeling; and, in view of them, he

would be a man of some temerity who ventured to-day to deny to Canada either a national feeling or a national status.

VI. NATIONALISM IN LETTERS AND ART

"Confederation marks the end of an old era and the beginning of a new in matters political. The same is true of matters literary."—ARCHIBALD MACMECHAN, *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (Toronto, 1924).

THE propriety of speaking of "Canadian literature" or of "Canadian art" has sometimes been questioned, and with a show of reason. Among so-called Canadian writers and painters there have been many whose residence in Canada was an accident only, and who owed their inspiration wholly to old-world models. Even among writers and painters born and educated in Canada, there have been not a few whose work has contained nothing distinctively Canadian.

It was not, indeed, until well after Confederation that a national note began to appear in Canadian letters. Even in the poetry of D'Arcy McGee and Joseph Howe one searches in vain for a strong nationalist impulse. The first writer in whose work nationalist feeling was clearly seen was Charles

Mair; and Mair, as we have seen, was one of the pioneers of the “Canada First” movement. The lines in which he commemorated, in *Dreamland and other Poems*, published in 1868, the death of Thomas D’Arcy McGee reveal a clear appreciation of McGee’s message to Canadians; and in the verses “In Memory of William A. Foster”, which he wrote twenty years later, he translated into poetry the message of “Canada First”:

But mark, by Fate’s strong finger traced,
Our country’s rise; see time unfold,
In our own land, a nation based
On manly deeds, not lust for gold.

Nor lessened would the duty be
To rally, then, around the Throne;
A filial nation, strong and free—
Great Britain’s child to manhood grown.

But lift the curtain which deceives,
The veil that intercepts the sight,
The drapery dependence weaves
To screen us from the nobler light.

First feel throughout the throbbing land
A nation’s pulse, a nation’s pride—
The independent life—then stand
Erect, unbound, at Britain’s side.

But it remained for a later generation to give to Canadian national feeling its fullest expression. Between 1860 and 1862—just at the moment when D'Arcy McGee was preaching his new evangel—there was born a group of writers who were destined to grow up amid the new conditions created by Confederation. These were Charles G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman, William Wilfred Campbell, Duncan Campbell Scott, and Pauline Johnson. Of them all, Charles G. D. Roberts was the only one who came, even indirectly, in touch with the "Canada First" movement. When a young man, he spent a year in Toronto on the staff of the *Week*, an excellent weekly founded in 1884 by Goldwin Smith and others who had been sympathetic toward "Canada First". To this may be attributed perhaps the vigorous nationalistic note which appeared in some of Roberts's earlier verse. His "Collect for Dominion Day", his "Ode for the Canadian Confederacy", and his "Canada" breathe the very spirit of the Twelve Apostles and the Canadian National Association. Finest of these is the poem entitled "Canada":

O Child of Nations, giant-limbed,
Who stand'st among the nations now
Unheeded, unadorned, unhymned,
With unanointed brow,

How long the ignoble sloth, how long
The trust in greatness not thine own?
Surely the lion's breed is strong
To front the world alone.

How long the indolence, ere thou dare
Achieve thy destiny, seize thy fame,—
Ere our proud eyes behold thee bear
A nation's franchise, nation's name?

The Saxon force, the Celtic fire,
These are thy manhood's heritage!
Why rest with babes and slaves? Seek higher
The place of race and age.

Later, Roberts left Canada, and went to live
in the United States, for reasons which he
himself explained:

You've piped at home, where none could pay,
Till now, I trust, your wits are riper,
Make no delay, but come this way,
And pipe for them that pay the piper.

With his removal to New York, he ceased to
be the poet laureate of Canadian nationalism.
But he never surpassed the native vigour and

power of his earlier work; and nothing can rob this work of its significance.

Of Roberts's contemporaries enumerated above none was so consciously and avowedly as he a nationalistic poet. But all of them were distinctively Canadian. They were, or are, all poets of nature; and the nature of which they sang was that of the Canadian countryside. In Lampman's poems, for example, no Canadian place-names stand out upon the page; but his landscape is unmistakably Canadian. In his "April", his "Heat", his "September", and in that last splendid sonnet which he wrote, beginning

The frost that stings like fire upon my cheek,
there are unerringly depicted the Canadian
seasons. The same is true of Bliss Carman,
as in his famous "Low Tide on Grand Pré"
and in such lines as

The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
Of bugles going by,
And my lonely spirit thrills
To see the frosty asters on the hills.

The Canadian nature-poets may not make mention of Canadian nationality; but behind

their poetry there has been a pure and undoubted national feeling. National feeling is closely related to the soil, as may be seen from the fact that national emblems are invariably the product of the soil; and any poets who sing, or writers who write, with pride of the peculiar qualities of their native land are exponents of nationalism.

One could adduce many more illustrations of the national note in Canadian letters since Confederation. It is found in Dr. W. H. Drummond's *habitant* verse, in Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, in Ralph Connor's earlier novels, and even in the magical poetry of Marjorie Pickthall. It is obvious in the essays of Sir Andrew MacPhail and Archibald MacMechan, and in the work of a group of historians such as few young countries can boast of—William Wood, George M. Wrong, Sir John Willison, A. G. Doughty, Adam Shortt, O. D. Skelton, to mention only a few. But enough has been said to indicate the mark which Canadian national feeling has made, and is continuing to make, in the sphere of letters.

As in letters, so in art. Most of the early Canadian artists—such as Jacobi, Kreighoff, Berthon, Perré, Fowler, and Robert Harris—were born in England, or France, or Germany, and were trained under old-world influences. Even among native-born Canadian artists—such as Blair Bruce, Wyatt Eaton, Paul Peel, and J. W. Morrice—there have been few who did not enjoy a foreign training, and who did not do much of their best work abroad. Not until just before the Great War did a nationalist movement in Canadian art begin to reveal itself. It was in 1912 that Tom Thomson, a native-born genius who drew his inspiration from the north country where he earned his livelihood as a fire-ranger and guide, began to paint. Thomson died in 1917, after only a few years of most significant work; but his mantle fell on what has been known as “the Group of Seven”—Lawren Harris, A. Y. Jackson, J. E. H. MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Frank Johnston, Frank Carmichael, and F. H. Varley. The work of this group has attracted international attention, mainly because of its strong native character.

It tends at times to the crude and bizarre; but at its best it is instinct with the feeling of Canada's "great open spaces", from which indeed it draws its inspiration.

"The message that the Group of Seven art movement," writes the historian of the movement,¹ "gives to this age is the message that here in the North has arisen a young nation with faith in its own creative genius. British North America in the first fifty years of its confederation gave indication of such a faith in almost all fields except the creative arts. Culturally, it chose to remain a mere outpost of Europe. To-day, so far as painting is concerned, this is no longer true."

¹ F. B. Housser, *A Canadian Art Movement* (Toronto, 1926), p. 215.

VII. TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

"One voice, one people,—one in heart,
And soul, and feeling, and desire!

"The hero-deed cannot expire;
The dead still play their part.,,

—CHARLES SANGSTER, *Brock.*

CANADIAN national feeling is still young, and is still growing. It grew appreciably even during the period of the Great War. "Nationality," as Mr. A. E. Zimmern has pointed out,¹ "means more to a Jew and an Armenian (probably the two oldest surviving forms of national consciousness) than to a Canadian; and, to quote a famous phrase, 'it means more to be a Canadian to-day' than it did before the second battle of Ypres."

Canadian nationalism, it is true, is far from absolute, since it contains within it two subordinate nationalisms, the British-Canadian and the French-Canadian, each based mainly on the element of language. But there is in this fact itself nothing deplorable; for, as we have seen, two or more subordinate

¹ A. E. Zimmern, *Nationality and Government*, p. 55.

nationalisms may well exist within a single supernationalism. Indeed, a state which contains within it two or more varieties of national feeling is in some respects—*pace* the advocates of “self-determination”—in a more advantageous position than a state which contains within it only one type of nationalism. In the latter state nationalism is apt to become intolerant, to regard itself as the sole basis of citizenship; whereas, in a composite national state, people are likely to be forced to learn the lesson of toleration. A psychological phenomenon like national feeling is no more fitted to be the basis of the state than a psychological phenomenon like religious feeling. It has taken the world many centuries of religious wars to learn the lesson of religious toleration; and it is apparently going to take it some centuries of national wars to learn the lesson of national toleration.¹ But

¹ “It took Western Europe several generations after the Thirty Years’ War to realize that religion, being subjective, was no satisfactory criterion of Statehood. . . . It may take Eastern Europe as long to reach the same conclusion about Nationality. But in the long run the theory of the National State will go the way of Henry VIII’s and Luther’s theory of a National Church.”—A. E. ZIMMERN, *Nationality and Government*, p. 50

once this lesson is learnt there is no reason why two nationalisms based on language should not continue to exist within a larger nationalism in which language is not a necessary ingredient.

From this point of view Canadians are peculiarly fortunate in that they have at the source of their national history a federal compact itself founded on the principle of toleration. The Confederation compromise is the sheet-anchor of an all-Canadian national feeling, and as long as the spirit underlying that compromise is not forgotten, the continued existence and growth of an all-Canadian nationalism should be assured.

There is, of course, danger that the lesson of toleration, once learnt so well by Canadians, may under other circumstances be forgotten. There have been in the past, and there are to-day, Canadians who would seem to have forgotten it, who have been willing to go behind the back of the Confederation compromise. There have even been proposals that Confederation should be disrupted. In January, 1918, there was introduced into the

Legislative Assembly of the province of Quebec a resolution by Mr. J. N. Francoeur, the member of Lotbinière, to the effect that "this House is of opinion that the Province of Quebec would be disposed to accept the breaking of the Confederation Pact of 1867 if, in the other provinces, it is believed that she is an obstacle to the union, progress, and development of Canada." This resolution came in the wake of a serious conflict of opinion between the province of Quebec and the rest of the Dominion over issues arising out of the Great War; and feeling was then running high between the French and the English in Canada. Yet even at that time, and in that place, the resolution was not pressed to a vote, and the attitude of the majority of the members of the Assembly was expressed by the prime minister of Quebec, Sir Lomer Gouin, in a speech so sound and statesmanlike, so eloquent of the spirit of the larger Canadian nationalism, that it deserves to become a classic of Canadian oratory. In phrases almost ritualistic, Sir Lomer Gouin thus summarized his political creed:

I believe in the Canadian Confederation. Federal government appears to me to be the only possible one in Canada because of our differences of race and creed, and also because of the variety and multiplicity of local needs in our immense territory.

To make myself more clear I declare that if I had been a party to the negotiations of 1864 I would certainly have tried, had I had authority to do so, to obtain for the French-Canadian minority in the sister provinces the same protection that was obtained for the English minority in the province of Quebec. I would not have asked that as a concession but as a measure of justice. And even if it had not been accorded me I would have voted in favour of the resolutions of 1864.

At the time of the debate of 1865 I would have renewed my demand for this measure of prudence and justice. And if I had not succeeded, I would still have declared myself in favour of the system as it was voted March 13, 1865. And even at this moment, Sir, in spite of the troubles that have arisen in the administration of our country since 1867, in spite of the trouble caused those people from Quebec who constitute the minority in the other provinces, if I had to choose between Confederation and the

Act of 1791 or the Act of 1840-41, I would vote for Confederation still.¹

These words breathe perfectly the spirit of the larger nationalism. They reveal a willingness to tolerate the rights—and even if you will, the prejudices—of others which many Canadians, both French and English, would do well to copy.

Before Canadian national feeling can attain to a full-orbed completeness, it may be necessary to revise somewhat the details of the Confederation compromise. That compromise, as embodied in the Seventy-Two Resolutions, was the result of a brief and hasty conference; and it is reasonable to suppose that, after the experience of the last half-century, there may be room for some revision of its details. In particular, it is desirable that there should be a new agreement with regard to the language question in the schools. It should be recognized frankly that the factor of a common language is not,

¹ A. Savard and W. E. Playfair (eds.), *Quebec and Confederation: A record of the Debate of the Legislative Assembly of Quebec on the Motion proposed by J. N. Francœur, member for Lotbinière* (Quebec, 1918), p. 124.

and cannot be, an essential element in the growth of an all-Canadian national feeling; and while it may be too much to expect that the English-speaking provinces should give up their provincial control of education, while there are purely educational reasons why bilingualism should not be widely introduced into the schools of Canada, there are still obvious injustices to be remedied. It was clearly an oversight in the Confederation compromise that, whereas the French and English languages were placed on a parity in the federal parliament and the federal courts, there was no provision whereby the French language was given any standing as the language of instruction in the schools of the federal capital, where thousands of French-Canadian servants of the state are compelled to live. Whether the city of Ottawa and its environs could even at this late date be erected into a federal district, under the administration of the federal government, and with the same guarantees for both the French and English languages which exist at present in the federal sphere, is a difficult

question; but if some such concessions as this could be made by the English-speaking majority in Canada, the result would be, no doubt, to consolidate greatly Canadian national feeling—a national feeling based, not on the factors of language and religion, but on those of a common fatherland, a common history, a common allegiance, common political ideals, and common hopes for the future.

